Ute dialect

Ute[4] is a dialect of the Colorado River Numic language, spoken by the Ute people. Speakers primarily live on three reservations: Uintah-Ouray (or Northern Ute) in northeastern Utah, Southern Ute in southwestern Colorado, and Ute Mountain in southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah.[5] Ute is part of the Numic branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family. Other dialects in this dialect chain are Chemehuevi and Southern Paiute. As of 2010, there were 1,640 speakers combined of all three dialects Colorado River Numic.[1] Ute's parent language, Colorado River Numic, is classified as a threatened language, although there are tribally-sponsored language revitalization programs for the dialect.[1]

Ute as a term was applied to the group by Spanish explorers, being derived from the term *quasuatas*, used by the Spanish at the time to refer to all tribes north of the Pueblo peoples and up to the Shoshone peoples.[6] The Ute people refer to their own language as *núu-'apaghapi* or *núuchi*, meaning "the people's speech" and "of the people" respectively.[5]

Ute	
núu-'apaghapi núuchi	
Native to	United States
Region	Utah, Colorado
Ethnicity	Ute
Native speakers	1640 of parent language [1] (2010)
Language family	Uto-Aztecan ▪ Numic ▪ Southern Numic ▪ Colorado River ▪ **Ute**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	utee1244 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/utee1244)[2]

Area where the Ute dialect is spoken.[3]

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Phonology

Vowels

T.Givon (2011) gives the following orthography and phonetic information for Southern Ute. Northern Ute differs from Southern and Central in some lexical and phonological areas.[4]

Southern Ute has five vowels, as well as several allophones, which are not shown in the orthography. Each vowel can be short or long, and vowel length is marked orthographically by doubling the vowel. In Ute, the length of a vowel is often phonemic, and relevant for determining meaning. For example, *whca-y*, meaning 'wrapping,' versus *whcáa-y*, meaning 'swirling'. In some cases, however, the difference between a long and a short vowel is purely phonetic, and does not change word meaning. Ute devoices vowels in certain phonological or grammatical environments, as described in later sections. Devoiced vowels are marked in the orthography by underlining them, or, when the identity of the underlying vowel has been lost, with the letter [h].[5]

Here bold text indicates a practical orthographic representation, while the IPA representation is included in brackets.

	front unrounded	**front rounded**	**central**	**back unrounded**	**back rounded**
High	**i** [i]			**ʉ** [ɯ]	**u** [u]
Mid		**ɵ** [œ]			
Low			**a** [ä]		

Allophones

- [ɨ] is an allophone of **ʉ**
- [e] and [æ] are both allophones of **a**; the former is used more often by younger speakers, while older speakers use the latter
- [o] is an allophone of **ɵ**.

Consonants

Southern Ute consonants are given in the table below. As above, orthographic representations are bold and the IPA representations are in brackets. All stops in Ute are voiceless. Thus, **g** here does not indicate a voiced velar stop but rather a voiced velar fricative, similar to *luego* in Spanish. Also similar to Spanish is the voiced bilabial fricative **v**, as in the Spanish phrase *la verdad*, in contrast with the voiced labiodental fricative [v] which does not appear in Ute. The velar sounds **k** and **g** have some interesting uvular allophones: **k** becomes either a voiceless uvular stop [q] or a voiceless uvular fricative [χ] when either between two vowels or adjacent to the vowel [o]; likewise **g** becomes a voiced uvular fricative [ʁ] under the same conditions. Either **k** or **g** can become a voiceless velar fricative [x] when before a de-voiced word ending.

Note here that coronals are produced as dental sounds rather than the alveolar sounds used in English.[5]

		Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop		**p** [p]	**t** [t]	**ch** [tʃ]	**k** [k]	**'** [ʔ]
Fricative	**voiceless**		**s** [s]			
	voiced	**v** [β]			**g** [ɣ]	
Nasal		**m** [m]	**n** [n]			
Semivowel		**w** [w]		**y** [j]		
Flap			**r** [ɾ]			

Allophones

- [q], and **qh (**or [χ]), are allophones of **k**
- **kh (**or [x]), is an allophone of **k** or **g**
- **gh,** or [ʁ], is an allophone of **g**

Syllable Structure

Syllables usually follow the CVCV pattern. All words must begin with a consonant, but other syllables may or may not include an onset. When an onset is present, it is usually composed of only one consonant. Words with suffixes like *-'ni*, *-'na*, and *'wa*, can have a two-consonant onset, though they were historically *-ni-'i*, *-na-'a*, and *-wa-'a* respectively. These earlier suffix forms did have single-consonant onsets. Most syllables do not have codas, but some codas do appear at word-end, such as in *pʉi-n*, 'I'm sleeping'.[4]

Stress

Each Southern Ute word must have one stressed vowel. Either the first or second vowel of a word in Ute may be stressed, with the latter situation being the most common. Stress is orthographically marked when it occurs on the first vowel. In compound words, the primary stress is applied to the first stem, and a secondary stress may also occur on a later stem.

Vowel stress is constrastive in pairs such as, *suwá*, meaning 'almost', and *súwa*, meaning 'straight out'.[4] Note that the high back unrounded vowel **ʉ** often is pronounced as a high central [**ɨ̇**] when unstressed. Though this change produces some minimal pairs, it is the destressing, rather than the vowel change, that produces the change in meaning and thus [**ɨ̇**] is excluded from the orthography.

Phonological processes

Ute has several phonological processes that affect the realization of underlying phonemes. Below is a representative sample.

- **a** changes to [e] or [æ] (usually for younger and older speakers respectively) when near **y, i,** or **ɵ,** such as in *ɵæ-qarʉ,* 'yellow', or *'ura-'æ*y, 'is'. Although **a** often makes the alternation when directly preceding or following **y**, **i**, or **ɵ**, it does not have to be directly next to one of those phonemes, such as in *sinaævi̱*, 'wolf'

- **ɵ** becomes [o] when directly preceding or following [gh], [q], or [qh]—however, **k** becomes [q] and [qh] between two **a**s or directly preceding or following [o], so the precise mechanism is unknown. *qhoqh*, 'bull-snake', is one word where this process occurs
- **g** becomes [gh] when between two **a**s or directly preceding or following [o], such as in *pagha-'ni,* 'walking about'
- **w** is inserted after **g** and **k** if the **g** or **k** directly follow **u**, [o], or **ɵ**, such as in *tagu-kwa*, 's/he was thirsty'
- vowels are sometimes devoiced in unstressed word-initial or word-final syllables, or unstressed syllables that begin with a voiceless consonant, nasal consonant, or glide, such as in *whcaay*, 'swirl'

Morphology

Ute is polysynthetic. Affixes are mostly suffixes, but there are three major types of prefixes for verbs and one for nouns.[4]

Nouns

Most nouns in Ute obligatorily have suffixes. Inanimate nouns usually take the suffix *-pʉ*/*-vʉ*. However, this suffix can also sometimes denote animate nouns or body parts. Animate nouns usually take the *-chi* suffix, but can also take *-vi*/*-pi* or *-tʉ*/*-rʉ*. The consonant pairs p/v and t/r were once allophones, but are no longer predictable; this produces the suffixes separated by a slash. Some older animate nouns have a silent final vowel rather than an explicit suffix.

-pʉ is also used to derive inanimate nouns from verbs, such as *piki-pʉ* "rotten thing" from *piki-* "be rotten". *-tʉ*/*-rʉ* are used for animate nouns that derive from verbs or possession: thus, *kaá-mi-tʉ* "singer" derives from *kaá-miya* "sings" and *piwa-gha-tʉ* "married person, spouse" derives from *piwa-n* "my spouse".

There are three ways plurality can be marked, and only animate nouns are marked for plurality. *-u* is the most common plural suffix, and *-mu* is usually used for plural nouns that derive from verbs or possession. These suffixes are placed after the obligatory noun suffix. Finally, some nouns show plurality by reduplication of the first syllable in combination with the *-u* suffix, such as in *táa-ta'wa-chi-u* "men" from *ta'wa-chi*. In this case, *-u* without reduplication would create the dual form: "two men".

Verbs

Ute verbs can take many suffixes and several prefixes. Negation is marked with both the suffix *-wa* and prefix *ka-*. Alternatively, instead of the prefix, the full form *kách-* can appear as a separate word somewhere before the verb being negated.

First syllable reduplication in verbs denotes the distributive case. Thus, *táa-pʉgay-'u* "[s/he] kicked him (once)" becomes *ta-táa-pʉgay-'u* "[s/he] kicked him repeatedly".

Incorporation can take place at the leftmost prefix position to add the meanings of the incorporated word to the verb. For example, *'apagha-y* "[s/he] is talking" and *pia-'apagha-y* "[s/he] is sweet-talking".

Verbs usually take the suffix-*ka* after the stem when the subject is plural. *-ka* can also be realized as *-qa, -kwa, -kya*, etc. according to the phonological processes above. Many suffixes are used to denote tense,

aspect, and modality. Some of the more common of these suffixes include *-y* for the present tense, *-vaa-ni* for the future, and *-miya.* for the habitual. Other suffixes include *-ti*, *-kʉ*, and *-ta*, which mark the causative, benefactive, and passive case respectively.

Syntax

Word order in Ute is flexible and determined primarily by discourse pragmatics, although speakers will mostly use SOV order when producing isolated clauses.[4]

Case Marking

Ute marks nouns for nominative and oblique case. The former category contains subjects and predicates, and the latter contains objects and genitives. In most cases, the final vowel of the entire noun is devoiced in the nominative case and voiced in the oblique case. For example, "woman" in the nominative is *mama-chi* and in the oblique is *mama-chi*. In some pronouns, the (voiced) suffix *-y* is added to mark the oblique case, as in singular "you", which is *'ʉ́mʉ* in the nominative and *'ʉ́mʉ-y* in the oblique.

Noun Incorporation

As described above in morphology, nouns and other words can be incorporated as prefixes of verbs to specify the method of action: for example, *wii-chi-m tʉka-y-aqh*, "s/he eats it with a knife" can incorporate *wii-chi-m*, "knife", into the verb *tʉka-y-aqh*, "eats" to produce *wii-tʉka-y-aqh*, "s/he is knife-eating it".

Switch Reference

Switch reference uses the independent pronoun *'uwas*, "s/he", or *'umʉs*, "they", to refer to a previously-introduced subject when there are multiple previously-introduced parties, to indicate that the subject of the current clause is different from the previously-mentioned subject. For example, in *'áa-gha máy-kya-pʉgay-kʉ, 'ú-vwaa pagha'ni-pʉga '**uwas***, "as they were whispering (amongst themselves), **he** paced around there", when the sentence begins, the subject is "they", and the independent pronoun is used when the subject changes to "he", a previously introduced character.

Notes

1. "Ute-Southern Paiute" (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ute). *Ethnologue*. Retrieved 2018-01-25.
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Ute" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/utee1244). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
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4. Givón, T. *Ute Reference Grammar*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011
5. 1936-, Givón, Talmy (2011). *Ute reference grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co. ISBN 978-9027202857. OCLC 733750317 (https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/733750317).
6. "What is a Ute?" (http://www.utefans.net/home/ancient_ute/utetribe.html). Retrieved 2012-01-24.

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